

Elementary Education Network Newsletter



Professional development is the theme of the second newsletter of the Elementary Education Network. This newsletter expands upon Recommendations 13 and 14 in *Elementary Makes the Grade!* As we ask more and more from teachers, we need to provide them with the support necessary to implement California's high standards. This issue includes articles highlighting the opportunity for experienced teachers to achieve National Board Certification, summarizing the lessons learned from schools who have received National Model Professional Development Awards, and featuring F. C. Joyce Elementary School as a school that is implementing best practices in literacy and professional development.

We hope you will be able to attend our *School's In!* Preconference on August 13 in Sacramento. It will be the first opportunity for elementary and preschool educators throughout California to come together as members of the Elementary Education Network and collaborate on common issues related to implementing standards-based education. James Stigler will provide a keynote address highlighting effective practices from educators throughout the world.

Over the next six months, the Elementary Education Network regions will be providing professional development in literacy and mathematics. We will keep you informed of these regional activities as they become available. Please see our Web site at <www.cde.ca.gov/elementary> for the latest updates.

*Barbara Baseggio, Manager
Elementary Networks Office*

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Stigler to Address *School's In!* Preconference

Join us for the *School's In!* one-day preconference on August 13, 2001 at the Sacramento Convention Center. James Stigler, co-author of *The Teaching Gap* and *The Learning Gap: Why Our Schools Are Failing and What We Can Learn from Japanese and Chinese Education*, will provide the keynote address for the preconference. He will discuss the best ideas from the world's teachers for improving education in the classroom.

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Summary of Research on Professional Development

Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Model Professional Development

WestEd (2000) conducted a study that examined the eight schools that received National Model Professional Development Awards in 1996-97 and 1997-98. Award recipients demonstrated that their professional development programs resulted in increased student learning. The key finding of this study was that these schools developed a culture of learning among the staff. In these schools, the nature of staff development shifted from isolated learning and workshops to focused, ongoing organizational learning built on collaborative reflection and action. (p. 11)

Six broad lessons emerged across the eight schools.

1. Use clear, agreed-upon student achievement goals to focus and shape teacher learning.

Clear, student-centered goals have focused teacher learning in each of these schools. The goals grew out of an intensive collaborative process of looking hard at where the school is and how students are performing across the curriculum, and then deciding where the school wants to go. Often the process started small, and then expanded into other areas. As one teacher said, "Now it feels like the whole school is pulling together, trying to meet the goals that we have all discussed and created together." (p 17)

2. Provide an expanded array of professional development opportunities.

As part of their improvement plans, all these schools used outside expertise through traditional professional development such as workshops, district or school inservices and conferences. These usually involved a defined group such as grade-level teams. Because teachers engaged in training as a team, they had a shared set of ideas to implement and a team with which to discuss implementation issues. In addition to traditional learning opportunities, these schools also used peer and expert coaching, grade-level meetings,

curriculum development groups, study groups, action research groups, and dialogue sessions.

3. Embed ongoing, informal learning into the school culture.

Teachers stressed that while formal training sets the stage, most of the staff development occurs informally through asking for assistance from colleagues, team meetings, study groups, and other informal means. Training is considered only one part of the ongoing process of learning. Teachers at these schools created opportunities for sharing and learning within their daily work.

4. Build a highly collaborative school environment where working together to solve problems and learn from each other become cultural norms.

These schools are characterized by shared ownership and governance and have teams and task forces that coordinate curriculum and schoolwide initiatives. As one teacher indicated, "School performance goals are not attained through the practices of individual teachers, but through what our faculty does as a whole." (p. 29)

5. Find and use the time to allow teacher learning to happen.

Finding time can be the biggest barrier to school change. Through a combination of creative planning and everyone pulling together, these schools were able to find time to do what was needed—time both within and outside of the school day.

6. Keep checking a broad range of student performance data.

These schools looked at data and evaluated their professional development on one ultimate criterion: What effect is it having on students? Frequent analysis and discussion of student work and progress enabled these staffs to make mid-course corrections. ■

Source: WestEd, 2000. *Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Model Professional Development*. San Francisco: WestEd. <www.wested.org/pub/docs/83>

National Board Certification—One Way to Keep Growing as a Professional

“National Board Certification is the best thing you can do to improve your teaching. I had been teaching 11 years and wanted a challenge,” reports Steve Hicks, a preschool teacher at Sixth Avenue Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

For experienced teachers, National Board Certification offers a rigorous and comprehensive professional development experience. National Board Certification provides teachers with opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of teaching, and receive recognition and financial rewards. Advanced certification for teachers is offered in over 20 areas including early childhood, which corresponds to ages 3 to 8, and middle childhood, involving ages 7 to 12.

The year-long assessment process includes two components:

1. developing a portfolio that includes videotapes of classroom instruction, an in-depth exploration of the process of assessment and monitoring students' progress, and reflective narratives on the goals and methods of their teaching; and
2. completing a one-day set of essay examinations focused on content knowledge and age-appropriate pedagogy.

Karen Caruso, a third grade teacher at Third Street Elementary School in Los Angeles Unified, states that, “National Board Certification makes you analyze your teaching in terms of student outcomes and helps you to really look at students.”

The National Board Certification is designed to be collaborative. Colleagues provide critical reflection, help to build professional knowledge, and lend emotional and logistical support. The reflection, sharing with others, and collaboration were the most valuable parts of the certification process according to both Steve Hicks and Karen Caruso.

Candidate Support and Incentives for National Board Certified Teachers

Support for teachers seeking National Board Certification is available through regional support centers. The California State University system is working on developing master's programs that also help prepare teachers for National Board Certification. For more information on the support available, see the CDE web site at www.cde.ca.gov/pd/nbpts.html and contact your local district. Recognizing the benefits of collaboration, Karen Caruso indicated that teachers from her support group have continued to meet and collaborate even after they achieved National Board Certification.

“National Board Certification is the best thing you can do to improve your teaching. I had been teaching 11 years and wanted a challenge.” Steve Hicks, a Los Angeles Unified School District preschool teacher

California offers three incentive programs for National Board Certified Teachers. State funding of up to \$1,000 is available to provide a subsidy towards the application fee. Teachers who become Nationally Board Certified may be eligible for a one-time incentive award of \$10,000. In addition, teachers who teach in a low performing school (defined as schools in the bottom half of the API) may be eligible for an additional state incentive of \$5,000 per year for up to 4 years. The CDE web site at www.cde.ca.gov/pd/nbpts.html provides details regarding these state incentive programs.

Many districts also offer incentives including subsidies for the application fee, increased salary, release time, and technical support with videotaping. The Los Angeles Unified School District offers a 15 percent stipend for Board Certified teachers who provide 92 hours of additional service providing professional development. Support providers from Los Angeles and the San Francisco area indicated that the state and local incentives are important to ensure that all teachers have the opportunity to apply for certification and are rewarded for their achievements. ■

BEST PRACTICES SCHOOL

Frederick C. Joyce Elementary School

F. C. Joyce School in Rio Linda Union Elementary School District has been named a Title I Achieving School in 2001. F. C. Joyce School is a high performing school that serves students from low-income families. The school has a 29 percent student mobility rate and 77 percent of the students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch.

Reading is the number one priority at Joyce School. Ninety minutes are set aside each day for protected reading using leveled reading instruction. During protected reading, instruction is provided in small groups geared to the instructional level of the students. No interruptions or pullouts are allowed and classes are provided with instructional assistants during this time to provide additional small group instruction. The Rio Linda District has a strong system of ongoing assessments in reading which is supplemented by some teachers with Reading RESULTS assessments. (See the March 2001 issue of this newsletter for more information on Reading RESULTS.) Students are tested every trimester in phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, fluency, spelling skills, and sight vocabulary. Additional support is provided by the reading specialist, who meets with small groups of students on their targeted needs to help them meet grade-level standards. The school also provides a summer school program focused on reading for students needing additional help.

The school provides for the needs of the whole child. Title I funding is used to provide counseling and nursing services. The counselor works with the upper-grade classes and has established a peer conflict management program. Character education is emphasized throughout the school and the school has a behavior committee that develops and refines school expectations for students.

An articulation meeting is held after the first month of school to coordinate school services. Classroom teachers meet with the principal, school psychologist, speech therapist, counselor, and special education teachers to discuss performance and any concerns they may have about each student.

F. C. Joyce School is a model technology school for the district. All classrooms are linked to the Internet and computers in the media center are used primarily for research. Trained teachers serve as mentors to improve the technology skills of other teachers. The school is planning to use their Governor's Performance Award for a rolling computer lab stocked with laptop computers.

The school has a well-qualified staff and the school and has developed a collaborative environment where student work is reviewed. Grade-level team meetings are held weekly in which assessment results are reviewed and techniques for meeting benchmarks are discussed. The Reading Specialist models guided reading instructional strategies in classrooms and provides inservice for teachers and instructional assistants.

The school has established four ongoing committees. The Language Arts and Mathematics Committees monitor how effectively the school is teaching the

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Frederick C. Joyce Elementary School (K-6)

Rio Linda Union Elementary School District

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Enrollment:	547
White:	50%
African American:	23%
Hispanic:	20%
Asian:	4%
Other:	3%
English Language Learners:	11%
Free/Reduced Price Lunch:	77%
Fully Credentialed Teachers:	100%
2000 API:	717
Statewide Rank:	7
Similar Schools Rank:	10

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language arts and mathematics standards and also presents inservice and reviews of current professional literature. The Technology Committee oversees technology purchases and the direction and application of technology for the school. The Behavior Expectations for Students Team (BEST) meets to review student behaviors, discuss the best strategies for continually rewarding positive behaviors, and maintaining a positive, safe learning environment.

Through the school's Program Quality Review in 1999-2000, the staff identified a need for more staff development in reading and writing. All staff members attended the California Reading Association Conference in reading and were trained in the *6 Traits of Writing*. As a result of the training, students are doing more writing across subject areas. Writing assessments, using three writing prompts, have also been administered. These assessments were scored by grade-level teams.

Another factor which keeps the staff current with a focus on improvement is that five staff members are obtaining their master's degrees and six staff members already have advanced degrees. District administrators build on their professional skills through a monthly professional book group.

The district is supportive of the school and has developed a strong district core curriculum aligned to state standards and district assessments linked to the curriculum. The district also provides curriculum associates in reading and mathematics who provide inservices and model demonstration lessons. The district and school share information to meet the needs of students who move within the district. Parents report that the school is open to their ideas and concerns and has helped them to understand the learning needs of their children. Parents also reported that school staff are able to help students and parents meet the many needs faced by low-income families. ■

“Research shows that the single most important determinant of what students learn is the expertise of the teacher.”

—Linda Darling-Hammond

Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching

Professional Development Resources and Web Sites

- ◆ The WestEd Web site includes *Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Model Professional Development*. <www.wested.org/pub/docs/83>
- ◆ The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Web site contains short multimedia tutorials on a variety of topics. The tutorials include a definition, short articles on the topic and audio files of experts and practitioners, and a listing of resources. On-line training briefs are available on over 20 topics including character education, differentiating instruction, action research and multicultural education. <www.ascd.org/frameutorials.html>
- ◆ North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's (NCREL) Web site includes *Professional Development, Learning from the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on Model Professional Development Award Winners* and video clips from award winners discussing professional development in their schools or districts <www.ncrel.org/pd/>

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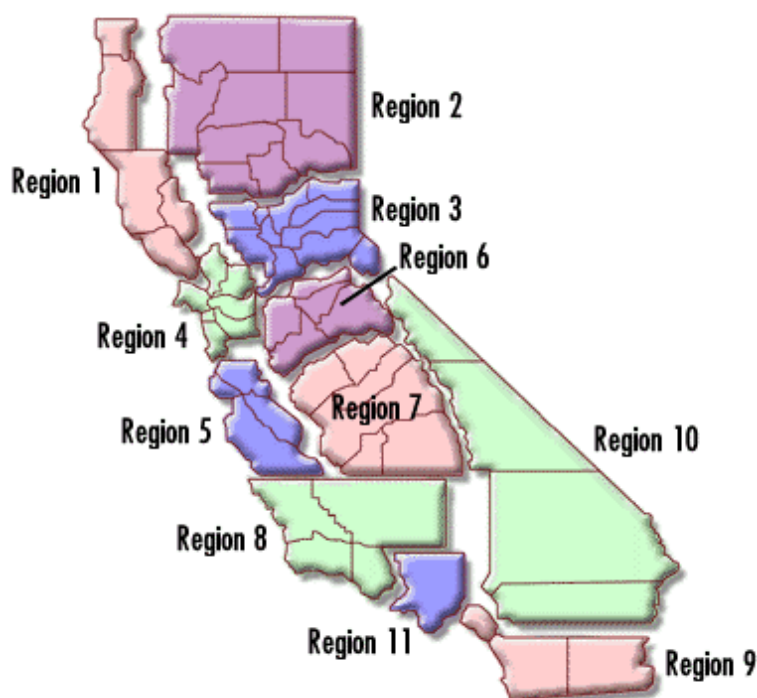
Preconference sessions for the Elementary Education Network will build on the guidance in *First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education* and *Elementary Makes the Grade!* and showcase best practices in literacy and mathematics. Participants in learning seminars will read and discuss briefs on topics including: transforming early childhood curriculum and instruction, teacher quality, and ongoing assessment. Opportunities will be provided for participants to collaborate with others in their region.

The 2001 *School's In! Conference* on August 14-15 will feature strands focused on implementing standards in English-language arts and mathematics,

providing standards-based instruction for English language learners and conducting assessments. Each strand will provide information on best practices, professional development opportunities, and related assessments. In addition to these strands, there will be updates on accountability, legislation, and the budget, and workshops on a variety of topics.

The cost of the conference, including the preconference, is \$179. You may register on-line at <www.cpoevents.com/event/SchoolsInSymposium2001>; remember to select the registration option that includes the preconference. ■

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